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SUBJECT: MONTENEGRIN INDEPENDENCE: DEVELOPMENTS

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Ref: Belgrade 894

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The GoM is moving quickly to establish itself as an independent state, following the June 3 Declaration of Independence. The GoM on June 4 requested international recognition from the USG (ref), and other members of the UN Perm-5 as well as neighboring states. Quint Ambassadors told Ambassador Polt that they expect the June 12 EU General Affairs Council meeting to give the green light to recognition and for individual member states to do so quickly thereafter.

¶2. (SBU) The Serbian parliament on June 5 formally acknowledged that according to the State Union Charter it is the successor state in all legal matters. Montenegro is expected to rapidly seek membership in international organizations, starting with the OSCE. President Tadic has been statesman-like and his office has indicated it will seek to ensure smooth transition at the UN with Tadic possibly traveling to NY for a Serbian flag-raising on 6 June. An angry and sulking PM Kostunica has taken a much lower road, emphasizing no rush on recognition and that he will focus on the Republic of Serbia's interests. Transition issues with regard to military matters appear to be proceeding smoothly and without controversy. End summary.

Montenegro Declares Independence

¶3. (U) The Montenegrin Parliament adopted a formal Declaration of Montenegrin Independence on June 3. The pro-Union Montenegrin opposition boycotted the event, as did guests invited from the Government of Serbia. Serbian President Boris Tadic excused himself for not being able to attend the reception in Podgorica. In an official letter to the GoM, he wished all Montenegrin citizens peace, stability and general prosperity, adding his belief that Montenegro will become a prosperous society which will through partnership with other states of the region, Serbia above all, ensure its European future. SaM Foreign Minister Vuk Draskovic congratulated Montenegrin President Vujanovic and PM Djukanovic on the declaration of independence. He said that while Serbia and Montenegro will be two independent states, the close relations between two fraternal peoples will remain unchanged.

Montenegro Requests International Recognition

14. (U) As expected, the GoM has moved quickly to request recognition of its independence. Requests have gone out to the USG (ref), neighboring states, EU states, and Russia and China. The Montenegrin MFA confirms that the GoM's application for OSCE membership was made on June 5, with acceptance hoped for by the end of July. Minister of Finance Luksic told media the GoM will soon apply for membership in the IMF, World Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), and similar international financial institutions. President Vujanovic wrote UNSYG Annan on June 5 requesting UN membership; the GoM has indicated it hopes to have its application for UN membership approved in time for the beginning of the UN General Assembly in September.

15. (SBU) The GOM hopes to pick up negotiations on an SAA for Montenegro where SaM left off in April, and GoM officials aim to have the SAA signed by December. Negotiations for WTO membership were already on two tracks, one for Serbia and one for Montenegro, from early in 2005. The EU Presidency noted the Parliamentary declaration of independence in a June 3 press release (10152/06), and said the General Affairs and External Relations Council will address the matter further at its June 12 meeting. Bilateral recognition of Montenegro by EU states will likely follow after the June 12 session. Quint Ambassadors confirmed this to Ambassador Polt on June 5 and expected individual EU member countries' recognition to follow very shortly after that meeting. Quint Ambassador's also speculated that: the UK would recognize and ask for agreement for its Belgrade Ambassador at the same time; the French would recognize, but not clear on when/how Ambassador question would be settled; similar with the Germans; Italy would likely recognize and dual accredit its Belgrade Ambassador.

State Union Bodies Dissolving

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16. (U) Montenegrin officials have begun to withdraw from State Union bodies, and replaced by Serbian officials where Serbia will succeed to the State Union institutions, e.g., Defense and Foreign Affairs. SaM President Marovic has departed his post, as has Deputy Defense Minister Maras, both Montenegrins. The Montenegrin chief of the MoD's Military Intelligence Service (VOA) has been replaced, and the Montenegrin Chief of the General Staff has been relieved at his own request. Serbian PM Kostunica has said that Montenegrins in the Foreign Ministry, both in Belgrade and abroad, should depart immediately.

17. (U) The SaM Supreme Defense Council convened by telephone for the final time on June 2, and decided that in accordance with Article 6 of the Constitutional Charter, to devolve command of the Serbian military to President Tadic, and command of the Montenegrin military to President Vujanovic. The speaker of the SaM parliament has said that it will not meet again, and that its final session was already held on May 11. Despite these developments, confusion was still reigning as of June 3, when two State Union officials admitted to DCM that no one knew the legal status of the State Union or how administrative matters -- such as when their pay stops -- would be handled.

Kostunica Rejects Solana's Offer to Mediate Divorce

18. (U) Serb Assembly Speaker Markovic has announced that the parliament will meet on June 5 to formally confirm Serbia's status as a successor state as provided in the Union Charter. Kostunica referred to a package of laws that will regulate devolution of SaM legislation to the Serbian Republic to be prepared in the next 45 days. Kostunica's comments to the press have been acerbic.

Meeting in Belgrade June 2, Serbian PM Kostunica declined EU FM Solana's offer to assist in the dissolution of the State Union and continued to suggest that the EU had played a role in the referendum result. EU officials described to us Kostunica's behavior toward Solana as bordering on rude. An angry and sullen Kostunica slammed the EU's suspension of SAA talks, claiming that it had affected the referendum outcome. The PM even publicly compared the EU with Mladic himself, arguing that both were holding Serbia hostage to the fate of one man.

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